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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



Mary Malec

Western Burrowing Owl eating a caterpillar, at Cesar Chavez Park, Berkeley.

Bay Area Burrowing Owls Face Many Challenges

Despite the hopes and best efforts of dedicated Golden Gate Audubon volunteers, the number of migrating Western Burrowing Owls that spend winter months in Berkeley's Cesar Chavez Park continue to decline. Ten years ago, 15 Burrowing Owls were seen in the park. This past season (from October 2009 to April 2010), only three owls were reported by 21 docents who spent more than 144 hours observing the owls in the park. Three more owls were seen in the nearby Berkeley Meadow.

"Though once one of California's most common birds, the Burrowing Owl is in decline throughout the state," said Mike Lynes, Golden Gate Audubon's Conservation Director. "We don't know why the owl population at this particular site is declining. We've monitored them closely, tried to reduce disturbances to the owls, and even set aside some of Cesar Chavez Park as a fenced wildlife protection area."

Many local populations of the owls have been extirpated or forced onto substandard, remnant strips of habitat due to agricultural and urban development. In the past 10 years alone, Western Burrowing Owl numbers have declined 27 percent (Institute for Bird Populations, 2010). Wind turbines, introduced predators, and invasive plants also threaten the owls.

BURROWING OWLS continued on page 12

Join the Fun! Birdathon 2010

There is still time to sign up for Birdathon 2010 if you don't delay. You can enjoy exhilarating bird sightings in your backyard along our shorelines, or farther afield—and help Golden Gate Audubon support our important conservation and education programs.

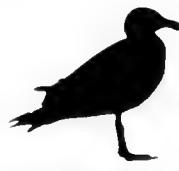
The spirit of friendly competition is in the air—along with the many bird species migrating through the Bay Area this time of the year. Sign up today to join this fun event, which is suitable for the entire family and community.

With just two weeks left before the May 16 completion date, you and your friends and family can get involved in the Birdathon by signing up online, over the phone, or in person at our Berkeley office. To register online, visit goldengateaudubon.org/birdathon.

A birdathon is like a walkathon, except participants count bird species instead of miles. Friends, family members, and coworkers support you by pledging any amount for each species you identify. Participation in the event automatically enters you into contests for a chance to win some fabulous prizes.

You can register as an individual or as part of a team. Once you are registered, you will receive pledge and tally forms (available online) along with other helpful instructions to get you on your way. On page 11, you'll find tips for making the most of your time in the field.

BIRDATHON continued on page 11



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Sneak Previews

Diane Ross-Leech President

Al Peters Treasurer

Noreen Weeden Secretary

Karim Al-Khafaji

Whitney Dotson

Alan Harper

Carey Knecht

Michael Lozeau

Mark Mushkat

Sarah Peterman

Jay Pierrepont

Phil Price

Linda Vallee

Rich Walkling

Mark Welther 510 843 9912

mwelther@goldengateaudubon.org

Kevin E. Consey kconsey@goldengateaudubon.org

Mike Lynes 510 843 6551

mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org

Noreen Weeden 510 301 0570

nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org

Marsha Mather-Thrift 510 843 7295

mmather@goldengateaudubon.org

Rue Mapp 510 912 2515

rmapp@goldengateaudubon.org

Anthony DeCicco 510 843 7293

adecicco@goldengateaudubon.org

Rubén Guzmán 510 843 7293

rguzman@goldengateaudubon.org

Stephanie Strait 510 843 2222

Jennifer Robinson Maddox 510 843 9374

jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org

Judith Dunham jldunham@earthlink.net

Bruce Mast observe@goldengateaudubon.org

webeditor@goldengateaudubon.org

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$35 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets six times per year (schedule can be obtained from the main office).

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Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702

TEL 510 843 2222 FAX 510 843 5351
www.goldengateaudubon.org
ggas@goldengateaudubon.org

Nature Store hours: Monday-Friday, 10-5

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We are the bird people—this is the primary factor that distinguishes Golden Gate Audubon from other environmental groups. We, like many other nonprofits, fight to protect Bay Area wildlife and habitat. But for Golden Gate Audubon members, our mission starts with our love of birds. As a member, you can also proudly state that you belong to the largest Audubon chapter in California, an organization that has been preserving Bay Area bird habitat for 93 years.

I was hired one year ago to continue Golden Gate Audubon's proud tradition and simultaneously to expand our capacity to restore additional habitats, educate more children and adults, and protect birds from the imminent threats of development and climate change. We are growing a larger and stronger organization to meet these challenges by reaching out to new members and constituencies. And we are creating new programs that will enhance our advocacy clout and position Golden Gate Audubon as one of the Bay Area's premier bird conservation organizations.

You hear a lot about our signature programs. But there are several developing projects that we haven't talked much about because they are "under construction." Here's a sneak preview of what we hope to accomplish.

- Work with San Francisco's Bayview Hunter's Point community educators and leaders to expand our Eco-Education Program to San Francisco in 2011. The goal is to educate children from diverse backgrounds to be California's future environmental citizens.
- Improve Golden Gate Audubon's website to make it a more valuable resource for birders by providing such features as area bird lists and maps, and online registration for trips and classes.
- Introduce a Backyard Bird Habitat Program so members can create a thriving bird sanctuary at home that will serve as a model for the neighborhood.
- Increase bird monitoring and surveys to provide more scientific data on the impact of development and climate change on bird populations, and inventory potential coastal and shoreline restoration sites in order to save valuable habitats on both sides of San Francisco Bay.
- Coordinate with state and local agencies and nonprofits to enhance emergency oil spill response and bird and animal rescue.
- Expand our Lights Out for Birds program in cooperation with PG&E and other corporate partners.
- Work cooperatively with the SPCA and local dog-owner groups to establish effective programs for reducing the impact of off-leash dogs on birds.

Of course, all these developing programs require money, and none is guaranteed. In these hard economic times, most groups are looking to make cuts, not create new initiatives. But we believe that these programs are important to Bay Area bird conservation and are worth working to realize.

Our new Development Director, Marsha Mather-Thrift (profiled on page 4), will join me and our board to help Golden Gate Audubon fund these programs. But we also need your participation to turn this vision into reality. Look for the programs that excite you, and join us. Now is the time to get involved by volunteering, by helping us reach out to a business interested in sponsoring us, or by making your own generous financial contribution. When you are deciding how important Golden Gate Audubon's efforts are to you, remember that we do it for the birds.

Mark Welther

—Mark Welther, Executive Director



CONSERVATION CORNER

TERNWATCH GEARS UP FOR THE 2010 SEASON

California Least Terns return soon to their nesting site at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is looking for dedicated volunteers to participate in this year's Ternwatch program. Volunteers still have an opportunity to attend one of the two remaining orientations before the program starts for the season.

Although the site is protected by a fence, the terns are vulnerable to many predators, including hawks, falcons, crows, and gulls. Ternwatch volunteers observe and report such predators, and the very presence of volunteers appears to deter many daytime predators from visiting the colony. The U.S. Navy-owned land is closed to the public, and the program offers a rare chance to view the habits of this endangered species up close: courtship, mating, nesting, and feeding chicks and raising them to fledglings.

Volunteers must first attend a two-and-a-half-hour training session. Then, from their personal vehicles, they monitor the tern colony for three-hour periods from a safe distance to spot any incoming predators and to prevent any disturbance to the tern colony. Each volunteer is asked to record predator and Least Tern activities on forms provided by the USFWS.

Volunteers need to attend only one training session prior to monitoring. They should arrive between 5:30 and 6 p.m. The training sessions, starting promptly at 6 p.m. and going to 8:30 p.m., are held on Tuesdays, May 25 and June 29, at the Alameda USFWS office, 2275 Monarch Street. Before attending a session, volunteers must RSVP to Susan Euing of the USFWS at susan_euing@yahoo.com.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS AT BERKELEY'S AQUATIC PARK

Golden Gate Audubon has been closely following the city of Berkeley's program to enhance the habitat for birds and other wildlife at Aquatic Park. Earlier this spring, members of the GGA staff and East Bay

Conservation Committee toured the park with Parks Superintendent Susan Ferreira to view the changes. Thus far, the Berkeley Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department has removed small non-native black acacia trees and other invasives from a 200-foot section along the eastern side of the main lagoon. Birders and other park visitors will now find nearly 50 newly planted natives including Coast Live Oak, California Buckeye, Western Redbud, and Toyon. A small grove of redwoods occupies a grassy area alongside the main walkway. Other measures have been taken to protect wildlife habitat.

Work has been suspended for the nesting season and will resume in September. The improvements, being done in phases, follow the recommendations of studies posted on the city's website (to view them, go to www.ci.berkeley.ca.us and do a search on "Aquatic Park"). Golden Gate Audubon supports the habitat enhancements at Aquatic Park and urges you to come to a meeting of the East Bay Conservation Committee if you want to learn more about the city's program.

EAST BAY DOG GROUP

Several months ago, the East Bay Conservation Committee launched a subcommittee to focus on issues related to dogs and wildlife in East Bay parks. The group's initial task is to work with dog owners and dog groups to identify opportunities for reducing incidents of wildlife harassment due to dogs, especially off-leash dogs. The group is already identifying especially important habitat areas—such as portions of Cesar Chavez Park and Aquatic Park—to set up clear boundaries for on-leash, off-leash, and dog-free areas.

Our initial successes are promising. For example, a member created a sticker with a photo of a Burrowing Owl that proudly states "I saved a Burrowing Owl today." These are being distributed to dog owners who are properly controlling their dogs in Cesar Chavez Park near the Burrowing Owl enclosure and are extremely popular.

CONSERVATION CORNER continued on page 4

The Future Is Now

Children these days face an uncertain future, as do birds. With the planet warming and the climate changing, life is in flux all around us. Even though big changes are some years away and we still have a chance to reverse climate trends, there is no time like the present for doing everything we can.

Every acre restored or preserved for birds and other wildlife will be crucial as species seek to adapt to changes in the environment. And every child educated about what he or she can do to protect planet Earth and its wildlife—from birds and mammals to amphibians and insects—will help spread the message to friends, family, and others over time.

That is why we need your membership renewal now to help support Golden Gate Audubon's vital work. Please don't wait. The year is passing quickly, and we need your support to ensure that we can identify key locations, mount volunteer teams to help in restoration, and reach out to more schools and families in order to save the one home we all share.

Send your membership renewal gift now to Golden Gate Audubon at 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702; go online and make your donation at www.goldengateaudubon.org; or call us at 510.843.2222.

Thank you from Golden Gate Audubon on behalf of the children and Bay Area birds.



Amiko Mayeno

Golden Gate Audubon has produced buttons from the sticker to be used when the owls return to winter at Cesar Chavez Park later in 2010.

The subcommittee will also focus on educating dog owners about the impacts of their and their dogs' behavior. Many dog owners think that if they don't see their dog chasing a bird or other wildlife, their dog isn't causing a problem. They don't realize that birds often flee when they see the dog coming, and that birds may avoid, or at least will avoid nesting in, areas that get a lot of visits from dogs. In this way, dogs can have a large negative impact even if they never chase or harass birds or other wildlife. Most dog owners care about animals, and we believe that more owners would cooperate with leash laws and rules intended to protect wildlife if they understood these impacts. We will also work with the East Bay Park District and East Bay cities to improve signage, provide educational brochures, and mobilize volunteers to help get the word out.

Our subcommittee needs your help, especially (but not exclusively!) if you're a dog owner. We meet at the Golden Gate Audubon offices in Berkeley. Please contact Phil Price (phil@creekeats.com) if you would like to attend or if you would like to help work on this issue.

TREASURE ISLAND HABITAT

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Early this year, Golden Gate Audubon submitted comments on the draft habitat management plan for Treasure Island. Treasure Island, which is man-made, adjoins Yerba Buena, a natural island that is steep and rocky. Both are connected by the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge to the city and the East Bay. Plans call for redeveloping this former naval station to provide 200–300 new homes and 74 acres of parks and open space. Treasure Island currently has many native and non-native plants.

Golden Gate Audubon's 2009 Christmas Bird Count, covering both islands, showed 34 species, including Red-throated Loon, Black Oystercatcher, and several species of

wintering warblers. The island is home to 33 species of breeding birds. Islands provide habitat but can be especially vulnerable to introduced threats. This management plan is an opportunity to improve the habitat on the island for both the residents and the wildlife. We will continue to monitor and comment on development plans for the island. If you are a Treasure Island resident or would like to be involved in ensuring that future development is mindful of environmental impacts to birds and other wildlife, please join our San Francisco Conservation Committee.

STAY INFORMED WITH GGA CONSERVATION ONLINE

Golden Gate Audubon now has an online forum where participants can share information about local conservation topics and interact with each other in a timely manner. To sign up with GGAS Conservation, go to www.yahoogroups.com and do a search for GGAS Conservation. Follow the simple instructions to subscribe. You will then receive a welcome message. Once you are a member, you can send a message to all subscribers. This discussion group is a quick and easy way to stay informed and participate in the Golden Gate Audubon conservation community.

CARPOOL WITH GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

If you are going on a field trip, would you welcome company? Do you have room in your car to take other birders? Or do you need a ride to an out-of-town class or weekend-long trip? The answer to these questions may be found by going to Golden Gate Audubon's carpool group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GGACarPool>.

It's easy to sign up to become a member of the group. Then, you simply post messages under the subject of "Need Ride" or "Offer Ride," along with the destination and date. The more birders who sign up, the more useful the group will be.

Carpooling works well for people who live near each other or can determine a convenient meeting place. It is also practical when parking is limited, like the trip to Alcatraz (page 6), which departs from San Francisco.

CONSERVATION CORNER continued on page 10



GGA Welcomes Marsha Mather-Thrift

Marsha Mather-Thrift joined Golden Gate Audubon in early March as our first development director, and we are thrilled to have her. She was chosen from a field of 35 highly qualified candidates because of her 30 years of nonprofit management and fundraising experience in environmental organizations both large and small.

Most recently, Marsha managed the West Coast office, and the national development program, for Friends of the Earth. She joined Friends of the Earth following its 2005 merger with Bluewater Network, in which she played a key role as Bluewater's managing director. For 10 years prior to that, Marsha was development director for San Francisco BayKeeper, where she worked with then executive director and current GGA board member Michael Lozeau. She also served as executive director of the California Wildlife Center (now WildCare) and the Foundation for Ethical Studies.

Marsha lives in Mill Valley and enjoys hiking nearby Tennessee Valley, running with her college-age daughters at Muir Beach, and playing soccer. She is also turning her backyard into a native plant oasis after gardening success in attracting butterflies, native bees, and birds to her front yard.

As Development Director, Marsha will be working closely with GGA Executive Director Mark Welther and the board of directors to engage more members and donors and to build the short- and long-term resources needed to fund our exciting and important programs. Please join us in welcoming Marsha.



SPEAKER SERIES

JENNIFER ROBINSON MADDOX, COORDINATOR

The Natural History and Future of California Condors

by Daniel George

San Francisco: Thursday, May 20
7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 p.m.
presentation

In 1982, there were only 22 California condors left in the world. Through a successful captive breeding population and nearly 20 years of efforts to reestablish populations in the wild, there are now nearly 350 condors, over half of which are free flying in the wild. Five release sites have been established in the American West and Baja California.

Pinnacles National Monument manages one of three condor release sites in California. More than 20 of the state's rarest birds now fly over the Gabilan Mountains and beyond. Pinnacles joined the recovery effort in 2003, and the national monument has worked with a wide range of partners to reestablish a wild population and study free-ranging condors to learn about threats to their survival. A comparison of what has been learned in the contemporary era to what we know of landscape level changes to California and the West during the 19th and 20th centuries helps inform us of strategies that will be effective in eventually building a self-sustaining wild population.

Daniel George is a National Park Service wildlife biologist who has concentrated on endangered species research since 1995. Having worked at Mt. Rainier National Park on Marbled Murrelet nesting studies and at the Point Reyes National Seashore on Spotted Owl population demography, he joined Pinnacles National Monument on California Condor recovery efforts in 2006 and currently works at Pinnacles as the condor program manager.

San Francisco Speaker Series: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street at Geary. Visit www.uusf.org/visitors_faq.html, and use the Map It! link on the left for directions. Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available.



Condor 318 on this year's nest in Pinnacles National Monument

Volunteer Appreciation Party – You're Invited!

To recognize the efforts of our dedicated volunteers, Golden Gate Audubon is holding our annual Volunteer Thank-You Party on Saturday, May 22, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at Marina Bay Park, Richmond. We will gather near the Rosie the Riveter Memorial for a delicious spring picnic. We hope to see volunteers and their guests from all around the bay for good food and good company, as well as for bird walks to nearby Meeker Slough, awards and prizes, and other activities for all members of the family.

We encourage carpooling, but if you drive, you'll find plenty of parking adjacent to the picnic area. From I-580 north, take the Marina Bay Parkway South 23rd Street exit. Turn south (toward the bay) on Marina Bay Parkway, go over the freeway, and proceed to Regatta Boulevard. Turn right onto Regatta, then left at the first stop sign. Marina Bay Park is at the corner of Regatta and Marina Bay Parkway. We will provide shuttle service from the Richmond BART Station.

This year, we are not mailing paper invitations, so please accept this as your invitation to attend the party. Please RSVP by May 10. In your RSVP, let us know if you need a ride or shuttle service or have food allergies. Contact Jennifer Robinson Maddox at jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.9374.

Volunteer Opportunities and Events

Saturday, May 1, 9 a.m. – noon

Pier 94 wetlands restoration work day. As part of our ongoing efforts to restore wetlands along San Francisco's southern waterfront, we will continue weeding the wetland and working on the new upland plot. Join us and see what birds have come back to the wetland. Refreshments provided.

Saturday, May 15, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Wetland habitat restoration at the MLK Jr. Shoreline in Oakland. We will continue our work around Arrowhead Marsh and Elinhurst Creek. Join us for weeding—and for watching the foraging and diving waterfowl and shorebirds. Refreshments provided.

Saturday, May 15, 9 a.m. – noon

White-crowned Sparrow habitat restoration. Participate in restoring habitat along Golden Gate Park's bison paddock by planting natives, weeding established sites, and nurturing the area for local White-crowned Sparrows. Closed-toed shoes recommended. If you are part of a group of five or more, please RSVP to kimberly.kiefer@sfgov.org

Field Trip Leaders

We are always looking for new field trip leaders to take Golden Gate Audubon members and volunteers to locations around the San Francisco Bay Area. This summer, Golden Gate Audubon will host a training session for new and current field trip leaders. If you have thought about becoming a leader, this is your chance to learn from other field trip leaders. To find out more, please contact Jennifer Robinson Maddox.

For updates on these workdays and for directions, visit www.goldengateaudubon.org/volunteer. Questions? Please contact Jennifer Robinson Maddox, Golden Gate Audubon Volunteer Coordinator, at jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.



FIELD TRIPS

JENNIFER ROBINSON MADDOX, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee
Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Jennifer Robinson Maddox at 510.843.9374. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Golden Gate Park

Sunday, May 2, 8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet at the front gate of the garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of the park has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds.

Jewel Lake

Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley

Friday, May 7, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156, philajane6@yahoo.com

We continue our monthly first Friday trips at Tilden Park. Meet at the parking lot at the north end of Central Park Dr. for a 1-mile, 2-hour-plus stroll through this lush riparian area. In early April, the spring breeding birds are returning, and many will be singing. We'll look and listen for Black-headed Grosbeaks,

Wilson's Warblers, and Warbling Vireos, among others.

Wildcat Canyon Regional Park

El Cerrito, Contra Costa County

Saturday, May 8, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Malcolm Sproul, 925.376.8945

Meet by the Arlington Clubhouse on Arlington Ave. in El Cerrito, next to the tennis courts between Brewster Dr. and Thors Day Rd. We'll drive to the trailhead on Rifle Range Rd., then walk a hilly transect of the canyon to bird the brushlands, oak woodlands, riparian areas, and grasslands. This is a 5-mile hike and is being led by Malcolm Sproul for the 30th year! Bring lunch and liquids.

2010 Annual Spring Bird Survey

Presidio, San Francisco

Saturday, May 8, 8 a.m. – noon

Steve Phillips, SPhillips@presidiotrust.gov, 415.561.4446

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by collecting data on the Presidio's breeding bird species. Since 2005, one morning each spring, volunteer bird-watchers have walked one of eight

designated routes through the Presidio counting species of concern such as Wrentits, Wilson's Warblers, and Olive-sided Flycatchers.

These estimates will help document trends in bird populations in the Presidio and the effect that restoration and reforestation are having on breeding habitat in the park. The data is only strengthened by continued monitoring—but we need your help. Novice birders will be paired with experienced birders, so this is a great way to learn to identify common San Francisco birds both by sight and by their spring songs. After walking their routes, teams will reconvene at the Crissy Field Center to share their birding highlights. The walk will begin at the old Crissy Field Center, corner of 603 Mason and Halleck St.

Garin Regional Park

Hayward, Alameda County

Sunday, May 9, 8 a.m.

Anne Hoff, anne2210b@sbcglobal.net

Birds we might see are breeders in spring plumage, including goldfinches and finches, orioles, Western Bluebirds, swallows, and sparrows. It is likely we will see raptors soaring over the hillside.

Take I-880 south to Tennyson Rd. (exit 26). Drive east on Tennyson to Mission Blvd., turn right, and go south on Mission for about 1 mile. Turn left onto Garin Ave. and continue up the hill. The road ends at the park entrance kiosk. Meet in the parking lot nearest the creek to the left after kiosk. \$

Alcatraz Island

Wednesday, May 12: Bob Lewis, bob@wingbeats.org

Wednesday, June 9: Eddie Bartley, eddie@naturetrip.com

Spaces may still be available on these trips offered exclusively to Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Members. Each trip is limited to 10 participants. We can expect to see numerous breeding birds, including Pigeon Guillemots and Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants. Birders need to meet at 8:30 a.m. to board the ferry. The trip ends at 11 a.m., though we may stay on the island later.



Purple Finch at the San Francisco Botanical Garden

Alex Navarro/www.pbase.com/alexnavarro

Reserve your spot by contacting Stephanie Strait, GGA Office Manager, ggas@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.2222. Once you have received confirmation, book space on the ferry with Alcatraz Cruises at 415.981.7625 or www.alcatrazcruises.com. Buy a ticket (\$26) for the 9 a.m. Early Bird Tour. Tickets sell out several days in advance, so reserve as soon as possible. The ferry departs from Pier 33, near the corner of Bay St. and Embarcadero. Each walk is about 1.5 hours.

Corona Heights

Friday, May 21, 8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Brian Fitch; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet in front of the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at the end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking the east canyon woodland and the north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring the hilltop scrub and south cliff.

Point Reyes National Seashore

www.parks.ca.gov

Sunday, May 23, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Emilie Strauss, 510.540.8749

Meet at Five Brooks Pond parking lot, located 3-4 miles south of Olema. We will spend the first hour exploring the Five Brooks pond on a flat trail of about 5 miles, where we expect to see Wilson's Warblers and possibly Wood Duck.

Afterward, we will get our lunches, water, and daypacks from our cars and head upslope into the forest searching for Pileated Woodpecker while listening to a chorus of Winter Wrens. The hike will be about 4 miles round-trip, and we may climb as much as 800 feet. We will picnic on a flat spot with downed logs if we can find one. The trail may be muddy, and the weather may be foggy and cool.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Wednesday, May 26, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Meet at the large spherical cage near the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around the Nature Center, then go up the garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down the lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. Now that spring has arrived at Lake Merritt, come see our regular visitors and, with luck, a few surprises, too.

Take the 127 N. to 11th St. to the 1000 block of Perkins, and walk into the park on Perkins. The best parking is at the bathroom lot near the spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue) near Children's Fairyland is probably free on weekday mornings, but up to \$5 on the weekend (white, yellow, and blue).

Hayward Regional Shoreline

Saturday, June 5, 8:45 a.m. – noon

Rusty Scalf, rsclf@sonic.net, 510.666.9936 (email preferred)

We will meet at the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center on Breakwater Ave (www.haywardrec.org/hayshore.html). At 9 a.m., we will proceed to the water reclamation area, located behind the locked gate. This area has been great for nesting waterfowl and herons. Redhead and Lesser Scaup have nested here successfully during more than one season, both nest very rarely in the Bay Area. Eared Grebes have nested here as well. From a distance, we will observe a tern colony that has had both Forster's and Least Terns. Avocets and stilts ought to have young by this date.

This trip is limited to 20 participants. Please contact Rusty to save a spot; late-comers will not be admitted.

FIELD TRIPS (continued on page 8)

Bob's Birders

Bob Lewis will lead a series of birding trips in Alameda County over a 48-hour Birdathon period. Together, the trips will explore the springtime bounties of our many East Bay regional parks. The trips focus on seeing as many birds as possible during the period in order to enable you to build your own lists for your Birdathon contributors. Participants will be expected to make a contribution of \$20 for each trip and \$25 for the owl-trip to the Birdathon on behalf of Bob's Birders. For maps and directions to the parks, along with other information, go to www.ebparks.org/parks.

You can also participate through any of our regularly scheduled field trips during the Birdathon to accumulate species and make a pledge. For more suggestions on how to raise Birdathon pledges or participate in the Birdathon contest, see page 1 or go to www.goldengateaudubon.org.

May 4, Coyote Hills Regional Park, 8 – 11 a.m.

We'll look for herons, raptors, swallows, warblers, and all the other good birds always present at this special park.

May 4, Garin Regional Park, 1 – 4 p.m.

Our targets are orioles, bluebirds, woodpeckers, and other dry country birds.

May 4, Redwood Regional Park,

7:30 – 10:30 p.m.

After we meet at the Redwood Rd. entrance, we'll look and listen for owls. This trip is limited to 20, and a \$25 contribution is expected. To sign up, contact Rue Mapp at rmapp@goldengateaudubon.org.

May 5, Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, 6 – 9 a.m.

We'll meet at the end of Edgewater and cover the adjacent areas of the shoreline, including Arrowhead Marsh, on an ebbing tide. Targets are shorebirds, rails, gulls, and terns.

May 5, Hayward Regional Shoreline, 4 – 7 p.m.

Meeting place is the end of West Winton. Our targets are lingering shorebirds, cormorants, raptors, terns, and other birds as the tide rises.





CLASSES

ALBANY ADULT SCHOOL

The following classes are held in the East Bay at the Albany Adult School. Class fees are noted on the school's website: www.albanyadultschool.org.

Birding by Ear

Denise Wight, www.blkittiwake.com

Four Thursdays, May 6 – 27, 7 – 8:30 p.m., plus four Saturday field trips, May 8 – 29, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Space may still be available in Denise Wight's second session of Birding by Ear. Now that it's spring, birds are in full song, and it's the perfect time to learn some of our local spring songsters. We will listen to birdsongs in class and, on field trips, visit various habitats to get a full range of the types of songs we hear in the Bay Area. Go to the instructor's website (www.blkittiwake.com) for field trip locations.

SUMMER IN THE SIERRA

In late spring in the Sierra, the meadows are alive with Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Wilson's Phalaropes, and the mountains are buzzing with nesting woodpeckers (Black-backed, White-headed, and Hairy, and Williamson's and Red-breasted Sapsuckers), Mountain Chickadees, Cassin's Finches, warblers, and flycatchers (Dusky, Hammond's, Gray, and Olive-sided). The calls of bittern, snipe, and Sandhill Cranes carry through the night.

Golden Gate Audubon offers two classes, each limited to 35 participants. There may still be openings in these popular classes. All activities take place in the Sierra. The initial meeting place for both sessions is the Yuba Pass parking lot on Highway 49 between Sierraville and Bassett. Additional details will be provided upon registration. Participants are responsible for their own lodging reservations. To register for these classes, contact Stephanie Strait, GGA Office Manager, ggas@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.2222.

FIELD TRIPS continued from page 7

Lassen Volcanic National Park

June 25 – 27, Friday – Sunday

Dan and Joan Murphy, 415.564.0074, murphsf@comcast.net (email preferred)

The 2010 GGA trip to Lassen will take place on the extended weekend of June 25–27. We will have a preview event on the evening of June 24. Camping facilities are available at the Manzanita Lake Campground. About half the sites are on a first-come, first-served basis. For reserved sites, check online at www.recreation.gov

or call 877.444.6777. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of the park at Hat Creek Restort, Old Station, 530.335.7121. Other information is available from the park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Details about this trip will appear on the Golden Gate Audubon website and in the *Summer Gull*.

Mono Lake and Eastern Sierra

July 9 – 11, Friday – Sunday

Emilie Strauss, 510-540-8749; Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net



White-headed Woodpecker.

Birds of the Sierra I

Bob Lewis, Bob@wingbeats.org, Rusty Scalf, RScalf@sonic.net

Thursday, June 10, 3 p.m. – Sunday, June 13, noon

Fee: \$99 for GGA members, \$109 for nonmembers, including one unforgettable dinner at San Francisco State's campus in Bassett on June 11.

Birds of the Sierra II

Bob Lewis, Bob@wingbeats.org, Eddie Bartley, eddie@naturetrip.com

Thursday, June 17, 3 p.m. – Sunday, June 20, noon

Fee: \$85 for GGA members, \$95 for nonmembers (no meals included).

The trip begins at Mono Lake County Park at 8 a.m., Friday, July 9. On the first two days, we will visit the west and south shores of Mono Lake, Lundy and Lee Vining Canyons, and Saddlebag Lake. The third day, we will be at over 10,000 feet and will spend the day hiking, with a significant climb. Participants must be in good physical condition.

This trip is limited to 20 participants. Please contact the trip leaders to reserve your spot. More information to be found in the *Summer Gull*.



OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST

MARCH 1 – 31, 2010

March marked the return in earnest of migrant nesting species, including swallows, orioles, and warblers. For procrastinating rarity chasers, March was a month of forgiveness. Many February specialties lingered through March to give birders another chance to extend their lists.

LOONS TO DUCKS

Seawatches from Pigeon Pt., SM, noted a visiting Northern Fulmar on the 7th and a Manx Shearwater on the 13th (RT, LB). Researchers on Año Nuevo Island, SM, first located a Brown Booby on Feb. 25 and obtained a photograph on Mar. 16 (mob).

Three White-faced Ibis remained in various S. Bay (SCL) locations, including Salt Pond AI and Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (mob). Likewise, the Oakland Tufted Duck continued to accept handouts at L. Merritt, ALA (mob). A Harlequin Duck remained 3 days through the 14th at Baker Beach in the Presidio, SF (SP, MZ; mob). On the 13th, another Harlequin was found loafing on a rock in Tomales Bay, south of Nick's Cove, MRN (BB).

The White-winged Scoter count at San Leandro Marina, ALA, maxed out this month at 3 males and 2 females (ZB; NA). A solo Black Scoter turned up at Emery Pt., ALA, on the 30th (GC). Both scoters were reported regularly from coastal locations.

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On the 15th, a light-morph Rough-legged Hawk made a rare visit to Patterson Pass, ALA (ZB, EP). A Prairie Falcon soared over Sugarloaf SP, SON, on the 13th (HK, BD). Mountain Quail called from the summit of Pine Flat Rd., SON, on the 28th (BM, TH). Early morning visitors to Coyote Hills RP, ALA, were rewarded with up to 5 calling Black Rails through the 30th (mob). A Pacific Golden-Plover paused at Albany Mudflats on the 3rd, seen from Central Avenue in El Cerrito, CC (DE).

Glaucous Gulls were reported from Salt Pond AI6, SCL (mob); S. L. Merced, SF (CH); Great Highway, SF (PSa); and Pigeon Pt., SM (RT). A Black-legged Kittiwake was



Brown Booby on Año Nuevo Island, San Mateo

ID'd on Mar. 6 at Pillar Pt., SM (BK), and the feat was repeated on the 7th and 13th from Pigeon Pt. (RT).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

A Long-eared Owl was discovered on Mar. 14 at Campbell Cove at Bodega Harbor, SON (HK, BD). Its Short-eared cousin was flushed from a grassy roost on Laguna Ave. in Coyote Valley, SCL, on the 25th (TG). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers lingered at Arbor and Creek Dr. in Menlo Park, SM, and at Edsel and Craig Dr. in San Jose, SCL, (mob). Likewise, a Hammond's Flycatcher hung around all month at Garin/Dry Cr. RP, ALA (mob). Another Hammond's was resound on Mar. 13–23 along Water Lane in Pescadero, SM, where it was first discovered on the Año Nuevo CBC (RT; LG, JF). A Yellow-billed Magpie strayed to Coy-

ote Pt., SM, Mar. 17–28 (RT, JM), and 2 Phainopeplas wandered over to Sausal Pond, SM, on the 14th (RT).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Palm Warblers continued through mid-month at D'Anna Yacht Harbor, Oakland, and Hollis-Doyle Park, Emeryville, ALA (mob). A Northern Waterthrush from the Pt. Reyes CBC was resound on the 15th along Sir Francis Drake Blvd., MRN (DMo).

A male Rose-Breasted Grosbeak provided eye candy at SF Botanical Garden, GGP, Mar. 14–30 (JC, BT, MW). After nearly a month's absence, an Indigo Bunting returned to a San Bruno feeder, SM, on the 14th, this time bedecked in indigo splendor (AP, fide EB). An Orchard Oriole was photographed Mar. 29–30 at SF Botanical Garden, GGP (SL; DMo).

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviations: "mob" = many observers; "foot" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Rod Thornton for helping compile Observations data.

Abbreviations for Observers: AP Ann Parker, BB Bob Battagin, BD Bill Doyle, BK Barbara Kossy, BM Bruce Mast, BT Brian Turner, CH Chris Harbard, DE Daniel Edelstein, DMI David McIntyre, DMo Dominik Mosur, EB Eddie Bartley, EF Eric Piolte, GC George Chrisman, HF Harry Fuller, HK Helen Kochenderfer, JC Josiah Clark, JF Jeff Fairclough, JM Joseph Morlan, LB Leonie Batkin, LG Laurie Graham, MK Mary Krentz, MW Marc Weibel, MZ Matt Zlatunich, NA Noah Arthur, NS Nancy Schorr, PSa Paul Saracen, PSc Paul Schorr, RF Ron Fulks, RT Ron Thorn, SL Steve Lewitzky, SP Steve Phillips, TG Ted Gross, TH Tim Howe, ZB Zach Baer

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA Alameda, CBC Christmas Bird Count, CC Contra Costa, CP County Park, Cr. Creek Cyn., Canyon, GGP Golden Gate Park, L Lake, MPN Marin, Mt. Mount, N North, NAP Napa, NWR National Wildlife Refuge, OSP Open Space Preserve, PRNS Pt Reyes National Seashore, Pt Point, Rd Road, Res Reservoir, RP Regional Park, RS Regional Shoreline, S South, SB State Beach, SCL Santa Clara, SF San Francisco, SM San Mateo, SOL Solano, SON Sonoma, SP State Park, SR State Reserve

HOW TO FORM A TEAM

Spouses, coworkers, and families can join you to form a team and share the excitement of discovering new bird species together. Think up a catchy name, enlist your colleagues, friends, and family members, and decide when and where you wish to count birds. You can even count birds in your yard or a neighborhood park.

Want to know how your team's results stack up against others? Check out our real-time "Team Matchup" on the Birdathon web page to see how participating teams compare by region and total number of species counted. Just go to www.goldengateaudubon/birdathon/matchup.

Also, did you know that participants are using social media to share the "birdiest" locations and connect with other birders? Location-based social media are becoming increasingly popular, and some people are



Want to join the Birdathon but don't want to drive? Get together a team to bird by bike.

now using platforms such as Foursquare and Gowalla to "check in" to public spaces and businesses, and are sharing tips with other visitors in real time right from their cell phones. This is a fantastic way to share bird observations and locations with other participants, or to new discover birding areas to explore.

We encourage you to follow Golden Gate Audubon as well on Twitter and mention your experiences and results on our Twitter account "GGAudubon."

GO ON A GGA FIELD TRIP

For another way to take part while learning about the best birding places, look no further than our field trip listings, starting on page 6.

Golden Gate Audubon has scheduled several Birdathon trips to help participants count species within a 48-hour counting period. Because our field trips are guided by volunteers who are bird experts, attending a special Birdathon field trip or even a regular field trip during Birdathon can enable you to see more species than you could on your own and provide access to fascinating bird information—all while raising funds for a worthwhile cause.

PARTICIPATION IN BIRDATHON HAS ITS REWARDS

Once you've enjoyed the excitement of seeing a host of wonderful birds, we want to show our appreciation for your support and extend the fun by inviting you to a very special event. Golden Gate Audubon wel-



comes all Birdathon participants to attend the celebratory banquet on June 2 at the Brazilian Room in Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley. There is no admission charge for all registered Birdathoners. Doors open at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. A copy of your completed pledge form is a ticket to attend this event, which will offer delicious food, wine, and other beverages donated by local caterers and wineries.

Festivities will include awards to outstanding supporters and prizes for the winners of 15 competition categories, as well as special guests and other excitement. Among the contributors are the Fallman Boutique Hotel at Clear Lake, AG Ferrari, California Canoe and Kayak, Scope City Optics, REI, and the Esalen Institute. There will also be gifts from local restaurants and wineries.

Don't miss your chance to participate in Birdathon 2010. Please help us reach our goal of raising \$20,000 to support Golden Gate Audubon's important education and conservation programs. Register today!

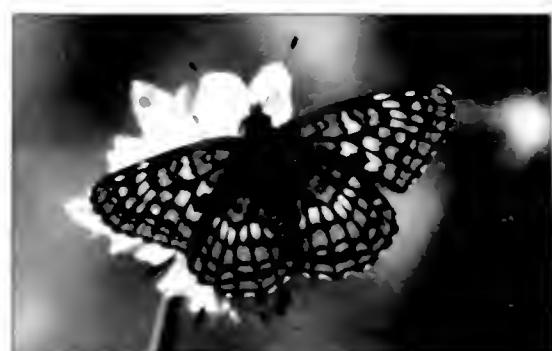
Leave a Bay Area Legacy

Golden Gate Audubon has protected Bay Area birds and wildlife habitat for more than 90 years. More recently, we have created innovative, award-winning education programs to engage families and children from diverse backgrounds with habitat protection. Our Eco-Education programs cultivate a conservation ethic and offer opportunities for first-hand experience of our extraordinarily rich local birdlife and urban-accessible wetlands, watersheds, and shorelines.

You can help continue this important work

into the future by naming Golden Gate Audubon in your will. Your gift will make a difference by enabling us to restore and protect more acres of habitat. It will also help us educate the conservationists of the future.

You can make a bequest to Golden Gate Audubon by simply designating "Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc., a California nonprofit corporation" in your will. For further information and to receive a brochure outlining other estate-planning opportunities that can provide for



Bob Lewis/www.wingbeats.org

heirs and lifetime income, please contact Marsha Mather-Thrift, Development Director, at 510.843.7295 or mmathert@goldengateaudubon.org.

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BURROWING OWLS from page 1

Currently, the only Burrowing Owls breeding along the San Francisco Bay shoreline are at Shoreline Park in Mountain View, where the population has declined steeply since 2004 and may be under threat of imminent eviction by developers. A significant population remains in eastern Alameda and Contra Costa counties, but it suffers heavy mortality from wind turbines in the area. Several other sites around the bay, including Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley, host wintering owls from September through April annually. The wintering owls are believed to come from their breeding grounds in Canada (where they are listed as endangered) and the northwestern United States.

Because of their precipitous decline, Western Burrowing Owls have been identified by the California Department of Fish and Game as a Species of Special Concern (Shuford and Gardali, 2008). Unfortunately, the designation does not afford the owls any special protection, and CDFG has not initiated any adequate policies to protect the species. The Center for Biological Diversity and others petitioned for the Western Burrowing Owl to be listed under California's Endangered Species Act in 2003, but the petition was rejected, in part because CDFG

suppressed a report from its own staff recommending that the owl be listed.

PARTNERS IN BURROWING OWL CONSERVATION

For almost 40 years, the California Burrowing Owl Consortium has served to bring together scientists, wildlife managers, and concerned citizens to gather data, present findings, and recommend conservation measures for Burrowing Owls. In February, the consortium convened to discuss conservation challenges, planning, and advocacy strategies for Burrowing Owls. According to at least one speaker, there is an effort to create a regulatory framework in regional conservation plans that will provide protections for rare species such as the Burrowing Owl, even if they are not listed as threatened or endangered. Speakers also discussed how successful conservation of the Burrowing Owl will depend on protection of breeding grounds, overwintering burrow sites, and ample foraging habitat.

Recently, the Friends of the East Bay Owls was formed to protect local owls, in part in response to the eviction of more than a dozen resident Burrowing Owls from their homes in Antioch. The group is actively challenging the Department of

Fish and Game's outdated and ineffective policy that allows for Burrowing Owls to be evicted from their habitat without requiring mitigation measures.

Golden Gate Audubon will continue working with other members of the consortium and partners such as Santa Clara Valley Audubon, Ohlone Audubon, and the Center for Biological Diversity to promote the recovery and conservation of the Western Burrowing Owl in the Bay Area. We owe a huge debt to our amazing volunteers who served in the Burrowing Owl Docent Program at Cesar Chavez Park and who have contributed to the Friends of the East Bay Owls advocacy efforts. Now is the time for you to get involved and help protect our Burrowing Owls.

If you are interested in working on regional and statewide Burrowing Owl preservation issues, please contact GGA Conservation Director Mike Lynes, mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org, 510.843-6551

To become a Burrowing Owl Docent, please register with Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Robinson Maddox, jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org, 510.843.9374.

Prepared with assistance from Mary Malec of GGA's Burrowing Owl Docent Program.